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Restoring
Lake Tahoe

Keeping
Forests Healthy

Improving
Air Quality

Enhancing Recreation
& Scenic Resources

Published by
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
PO Box 5310
Stateline, NV 89449
775.588.4547 phone
trpa.org
conservationclearly.org

 Printed on recycled stock

Healthy Forest. Healthy Lake.

For thousands of years, the forests in the Lake Tahoe Basin took care of themselves. Low intensity fires crept through the forests, clearing underbrush and thinning tree stands.

In the 19th century, pioneers clear-cut the Basin's forests, responding to a need for timber in the silver mines of the Comstock Lode. During the 20th century, forest management changed and natural fires were regularly put out and were therefore no longer able to clean out the forest. Today, Tahoe's forests are overcrowded and littered with dead and dying trees. The threat of catastrophic wildfire at Lake Tahoe is a top concern for TRPA and the entire community.

To help reduce fire danger and restore forest health, TRPA has made tree removal simple for homeowners. TRPA has entered into agreements with all local fire agencies to issue defensible space tree removal permits to make it easier to create defensible space around your home.

TRPA is working in partnership with the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team to streamline forest thinning and restoration projects around neighborhoods. We encourage you to do your part to create a healthier forest in your own backyard. By working together, we can reduce the risk of another catastrophic wildfire like the Angora Fire of 2007 and protect Lake Tahoe at the same time.

A Property Owner's Guide to TREE REMOVAL in the Lake Tahoe Basin



When is a Tree Removal Permit Required?

Before contacting TRPA, use these guidelines to determine if a permit is needed.

Tree Size

If the house is not along the lakeshore, a permit is required to remove live trees greater than 14 inches diameter at breast height (DBH). (See diagram at right for how to accurately determine the diameter of a tree.)

If the house is along the lakeshore, a permit is required to remove trees greater than 6 inches DBH between the house and the Lake, or trees greater than 14 inches DBH that are not between the house and the Lake.

Trees of any size that were planted or retained as part of a permit, or that are in a Stream Environment Zone (SEZ) or backshore area, require a permit for removal. (The backshore area is the sensitive area adjacent to the Lake.)

Dead Trees

A conifer is considered to be dead when it doesn't have any green needles. A deciduous tree must be determined to be dead by a qualified forester. Removal of a dead tree that could fall on a house does not require a permit. To remove a dead tree that isn't near a house, contact a TRPA forester to determine if a permit is required.

Substantial Trimming

A permit is required for removal of branches from the upper 2/3 of the total height of the tree, unless the branch:

- Is within 10 feet of a chimney outlet, building or deck

- Is rubbing or pulling on utility lines within your property boundary (always consult your power company before removing branches near utility lines)
- Is dead

Sensitive Areas

Any manipulation of live vegetation within SEZs or the backshore of Lake Tahoe, including trees and shrubs, requires TRPA review.

Construction Projects

Trees that are permitted for removal as part of a development project do not need a separate tree removal permit.

Defensible Space

In most cases, tree removal permits to create defensible space can be issued by your local fire district or department. Contact your fire agency for more information and to receive a defensible space evaluation.



How to Determine DBH

DBH stands for "diameter at breast height." Breast height is 4.5 feet off the ground, measured on the uphill side of the tree. Measure around the outside of the tree at breast height to determine the circumference, and then divide that number by 3.14 to get the diameter. A tree with a diameter of 14 inches has a circumference of 43.9 inches.



How to get a Tree Removal Permit

Fill out a TRPA Tree Removal Application and mail or deliver it to the TRPA office. The application can be obtained at trpa.org, at the TRPA front counter, or by calling 775-588-4547.

A \$53 non-refundable filing fee is due with the application. A TRPA forester will visit the property to assess the trees and issue a permit for any marked trees.

Tree Removal for Defensible Space

Thinning trees in close proximity to structures can enhance the fire safety of your home. Your local fire district is able to issue tree removal permits for defensible space purposes. Contact your fire district or department for more information:

City of So. Lake Tahoe Fire Dept.: 530-542-6180

Fallen Leaf Fire Dept.: 530-542-1343

Lake Valley Fire Protection District: 530-577-2447

Meeks Bay Fire Protection District: 530-525-7558

No. Tahoe Fire Protection District (CA): 530-546-2212

No. Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District (NV):
775-831-0351

Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District:
775-588-3591

For more information on defensible space, visit:
tahoefiresafe.com